



16th Special Operations Wing

Hurlburt Field, Fla.

Feb. 9, 2001



Video still by Senior Airman Sam Roberts

A Smokey Sam launches through the cloud of another Smokey Sam launch and illuminates the surrounding area. Smokey Sams are one of the munitions used by the 16th Operations Group Weapons and Tactics Unit to simulate war.

## OPFOR provides realistic combat training

by 2nd Lt. Rosemary Heiss  
Public Affairs

Miles beyond the last streetlight and hours after the sun went down, a group of special operators were revving up to practice unconventional warfare tactics.

Airmen from the 16th Operations Group

Weapons and Tactics Unit and the 4th Special Operations Squadron's scenario-building unit practiced calls for fire Tuesday at the Army Ranger Camp Area 6.

The scene was a dark, dense forest. On one side, a downed aircrew was trying to get to a helicopter landing zone to be picked up. On the other side of the forest

was a team of "bad guys," hunting the group.

The scenario was built to provide training for a gunship crew on how to get a downed aircrew safely to a pick-up spot.

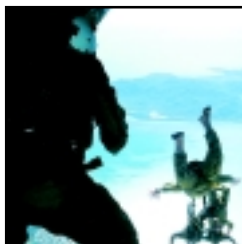
Though maintenance problems and poor weather conditions stopped this mission, such elaborate training takes place

regularly because of the unit commonly known as "OPFOR" or opposing forces, from the 16th OG Weapons and Tactics Unit.

OPFOR is an all volunteer force that plays good guys and bad guys in training

See **OPFOR**, Page 8

### News



#### Tandem Thrust

Special operators participate in joint combined exercise

Page 3

### Feature



#### Boy Scouts

Hurlburt Field Boy Scout Troop 509 provides opportunity for young men

Pages 14 and 15

### Sports



#### Varsity soccer

Comm stomps 6th Special Operations Squadron

Page 13

# VIEWPOINTS

## Open Line

The Commander's Open Line is your direct line to me for questions or suggestions about subjects of concern to the Hurlburt Field community.

To receive a response, leave your name, unit and telephone number.

Open lines of general interest will be printed in the **COMMANDO**.

Others will be answered by letter or phone call.

Remember, the quickest and most efficient way to resolve a problem is to talk directly to the agency responsible.

This gives them an opportunity to help you, and perhaps improve their process.

However, if you're not satisfied with the answer you receive, feel free to give me a call at 884-OPEN (6736), or e-mail your concerns to [commando@hurlburt.af.mil](mailto:commando@hurlburt.af.mil).



**Col. David Scott**  
Commander, 16th SOW

## Reserved parking

**Comment:** I'm calling about an unauthorized vehicle reservation at the vehicle maintenance compound. There are 10 spots inside the compound, which is questionable to begin with. Out of those 10, nine are reserved. Attachment 3 to the Hurlburt Field Supplement to Air Force Instruction 31-204, *Air Force Motor Vehicle Traffic Supervision*, dated December 1999, states no more than 20 percent can be reserved, and that's for handicapped, award winners, commanders and first sergeants only. The reserved spots now are for shop foreman and other lower-level positions.

**Reply:** Parking in the TRANS compound isn't covered by the supplement you mention because it's not open to privately-owned vehicles. The transportation squadron commander authorizes a limited number of key staff to bring POV's within the compound, and has allocated reserved spaces for them. This is within his authority and doesn't violate regulation.

# The expeditionary story: everyone's responsibility

by **Lt. Col. Bryan A. Holt**  
U.S. Air Force Aerospace Expeditionary Force Center

**LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va.**—What's the Air Force's Expeditionary Aerospace Force concept all about? Depending on where you are in the Air Force, this may be a very easy or a very difficult question to answer.

But no matter where you are, knowing the EAF story is everyone's responsibility. Ask yourself a few simple questions: How is my basic AEF knowledge? Can I explain the EAF/AEF?

If you can't answer these questions, just remember that the EAF is the new way the Air Force does business, and don't forget "10-3-15."

As stated in the Air Force vision, the EAF consists of 10 Aerospace Expeditionary Forces, each capable of the full spectrum of aerospace operations, and eligible to deploy once for three months in the 15-month AEF cycle.

Included are 10 lead combat AEF

wings, five lead mobility wings, and two permanently on-call aerospace expeditionary wings at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., and Mountain Home AFB, Idaho.

As part of the EAF concept, the Air Force is capable of providing rapidly responsive, tailored-to-need aerospace force capability, prepared and ready to conduct military operations across the full spectrum of conflict.

Yet, from time to time, we hear stories of Air Force members who can't explain the EAF concept and how it relates to them.

Too, there are those who think if they can just hold out the EAF may go the way of management-by-objective or Quality Air Force. But you can't just make EAF go away.

Since the end of the Cold War, with one-third fewer people and two-thirds less overseas basing, the Air Force has deployed four times more frequently.

The increased operational tempo has affected readiness, retention, recruitment and modernization. To put it simply, the Air Force just couldn't continue to do

business as usual. So the EAF is the Air Force's solution.

It's our vision for the 21st century, the recipe for how we'll organize, train, and equip to deploy forces for contingency operations.

EAF also helps create a mindset and culture that embraces the unique characteristics of aerospace power: range, speed, flexibility and precision.

We've made tremendous strides in establishing the EAF and great improvements in each AEF cycle, such as the development of "EAF Online" and the AEF Commanders' Playbook to help those deploying.

Test your AEF knowledge. Do you know which AEF you're in? Did you get enough notification the last time you deployed? Do you know about the AEF Web-based tools?

I challenge you to learn more about the EAF/AEF and how your new 21st-century Air Force does business. Whether you're home-stationed or at a deployed location, knowing the Air Force expeditionary story is everyone's responsibility. (AFPN)



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### Address information

U.S. MAIL: COMMANDO, 131 Bartley St. Ste. 326, Hurlburt Field, FL 32544-5271  
E-MAIL: [commando@hurlburt.af.mil](mailto:commando@hurlburt.af.mil)  
TELEPHONE: (850) 884-7464  
FAX: (850) 884-6093

### COMMANDO Editorial Staff:

**Col. David Scott**  
Commander

**Capt. Carol Kanode**  
Chief, Public Affairs

**Master Sgt. Cathy Landroche**  
NCOIC

**Staff Sgt. William Seabrook**  
Chief, Internal Information

**2nd Lt. Rosemary Heiss**  
Editor

**Airman Sam Taylor**  
Staff writer

**16th Communications Squadron**  
Photography  
**Barbara Anna**  
Production support

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Article submissions  
for the Commando  
should be sent to

[commando@hurlburt.af.mil](mailto:commando@hurlburt.af.mil)

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# NEWS

## Special ops jump starts Tandem Thrust

by Master Sgt. Michael Farris  
353rd Special Operations Group  
Public Affairs

**TOWNSVILLE, Australia**—At 10,000 feet, the Royal Australian Air Force DC-4 Caribou turned lazy circles off the rocky coastline. The waters of the Barrier Reef below, brimming with sharks, sparkled brilliant blue.

Inside the plane, an unlikely collection of the world's finest special forces prepared to jump into the Townsville airfield below.

Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces, an Air Force special tactics team and members of the Australian Special Air Service checked and rechecked their gear. The 10-member team was jumping into the exercise known as Tandem Thrust 01—a joint combined exercise involving 28,000 sea, land and air forces from Australia, the United States and Canada.

As the Caribou started its pass over the airfield, the jumpers assembled at the open end of the plane and, in an instant, were gone. Free-falling to about 4,000 feet, they opened their chutes and floated to the ground.

Master Sgt. Hiram Resto, one of the jumpers assigned to the 320th Special Tactics Squadron, said the training opportunities at Tandem Thrust are fantastic.

"The Australians are flexible and can adapt quickly to many situations," he said. "The environment they work in ranges from snow to desert to jungles. They have open spaces where they can train freely and their survival skills are some of the best I've seen."

Sergeant Resto coordinates with the crews to provide air platforms for the special operations forces.

Kadena Air Base's Combat Shadows and Combat Talons work closely with MH-53 helicopters from Osan Air Base, Korea, to insert and extract troops. The 130s also resupply troops on the ground with high-speed bundle and container deliveries.

Although located two hours north of the main Tandem Thrust exercise location at Shoalwater Bay Training Area, the helos combine with Pararescuemen from the 320th STS to comprise a formidable combat search and rescue package.

Sergeant Resto said the Australians have also taught his unit a thing or two about jumping.

"They've allowed us to use their smaller parachutes," he said. "We're learning how to control our canopies better because they're twice as fast as the canopies we're used to jumping with."

Warrant Officer Clint Palmer is the parachuting officer with the Special Air Service at Campbell Barracks in Perth. He



Photo by Master Sgt. Michael Farris

Col. Bill Ball, Special Operations Command Pacific, is the last man out during a jump over Townsville, Australia.

claims insights gained and friendships forged through the close working relationship aren't easily dismissed.

"Our special operations units are quite comparable and like-minded," he said. "Our greatest value is gained here by operating together. The 'hands-across-the-water' idea is more than a slogan. We're able to learn a lot from each other."

Brig. Gen. Donald Wurster, commander of Special Operations Command Pacific, said the best training occurs when the forces work together as teams.

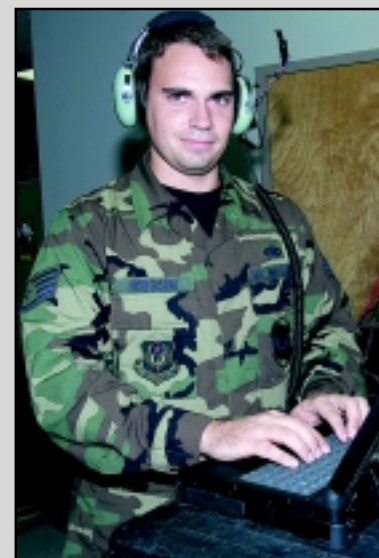
"We have an opposition force that's mixed Australian and U.S. troops," he said. "Our friendly forces are also mixed Australian and U.S. troops. When you pit those forces against each other, that's when *real* training occurs. One force may do something the other would not expect.

That enhances the combat capability of both nations."

Much of the planning for the special operations' portion of Tandem Thrust has been the responsibility of Maj. Denis Doty, 353rd Operations Support Squadron. "We face some great challenges here with nearly one-third of the group deployed with six aircraft and two STS teams," he said. "The interfaces we encounter every day with the Army, the Navy, the Australians and other units create an incredibly fast tempo. We've been planning this exercise for more than a year and it's exciting to see the missions go off every night."

Every day missions are changed, revised, canceled and born. "Profiles are modified by the hour, around the clock," explained Major Doty. "Don't blink around here or you'll miss something."

## Spotlight on ...



**Staff Sgt.  
Anthony Hodgson**

**Name:** Anthony Hodgson

**Rank/Duty Title:** Staff sergeant/Shop and flightline supervisor

**Organization:** 4th Information Operations Squadron

**Hometown:** Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

**Hobbies:** Computers and painting

**Contribution to the mission:** Sergeant Hodgson performs ground maintenance on SILENT SHIELD communications equipment installed on Air Force Special Operations Command aircraft. He trouble shoots and repairs installed equipment both on the flightline and in the back shop. The sergeant designs and builds carry-on systems and integrates new or acquired systems into AFSOC airframes. He also researches and documents future mission equipment upgrades and coordinates maintenance support issues with the host base and 16th Special Operations Wing maintainers and contractors.

Sergeant Hodgson maintains statistical data and validates contractor technical data. He trains people on installation and operation of all SILENT SHIELD equipment.

He's noted for providing information and advice to higher levels of management, and he's highly skilled in computer maintenance and technology.

He acts as the central control point for seven aircraft maintenance units for more than 90 pieces of mission equipment per week.

He performs periodic maintenance inspections on more than 50 pieces of SILENT SHIELD equipment monthly.





Photos by Airman Sam Taylor

## A splashing good time

Jason, son of Master Sgt. James and Vickie Skiles, 16th Communications Squadron, does a gleeful cannonball on the opening day of the Hurlburt Field pool. The pool's open Tuesday through Thursday from 1 to 7 p.m.; Friday from 1 to 9 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. The pool is closed Monday.

The base pool is open to everyone with an I.D. card, and the card must be presented to swim. Lifeguards are always on duty during pool hours. Lap swim starts Tuesday from 6 to 8 a.m. for active duty only. Open lap swim, for everyone, is from noon to 1 p.m. For more information, call 884-6866.

# Special operations community mourns second loss of young member in 8 days

by 1st Lt. Louie Cummings  
16th Aircraft Generation Squadron

Airman 1st Class Brandon Beard, a member of the 16th Aircraft Generation Squadron here, passed away after a single vehicle accident May 15.

Airman Beard enlisted in the Air Force and entered active duty June 7, 2000. He attended Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Following Basic Training he attended the Aircraft Hydraulic Technical Training Course at Sheppard AFB, Texas.

After completion of technical training Airman Beard arrived at Hurlburt Field Oct. 31, 2000, where he was assigned to the 16th AGS, 4th Aircraft Maintenance Unit. He worked as a hydraulic apprentice on the AC-130U gunship fleet.

He was a native of Doughty County, Ga. He lived in Cuthbert and made his home in Milledgeville for many years.

"Airman Beard was a good performer and always displayed a positive attitude," said Tech. Sgt. Robert Pike, NCO in charge of the hydraulics shop and Airman Beard's supervisor. "I believe he would have ex-

celled in the Air Force and was making great progress in his upgrade training. I was fond of Brandon. He was always courteous and professional with a likeable personality and sense of humor. He will be forever missed and will never be forgotten."

Airman Beard's family has set up a College Gift Fund in his honor. If interested in contributing, the family requests memorial contributions be made to the Brandon Beard College Gift Fund, c/o First National Bank P. O. Box 1087, Milledgeville, Ga. 31059-1087.



Airman 1st Class Brandon Beard

## Look who's talking: What precautions do you take to ensure you're safe while you're having fun?



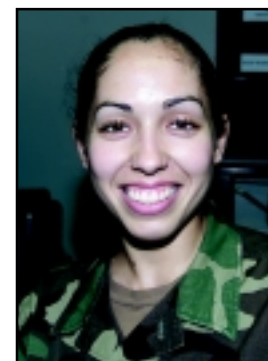
*"I smile. If someone sees you smiling, they get out of your way because they're not used to happy people, so they feel uncomfortable."*

**Staff Sgt. John Franke,**  
16th Security Forces Squadron



*"I evaluate the situation and then take appropriate action. Just because you're having fun, you still need to be alert of the potential dangers."*

**Tech. Sgt. Ronald Duquette,**  
16th Mission Support Squadron



*"I know what my limits are."*

**Airman 1st Class Katrina Vigil,**  
16th Communications Squadron

## Command chief selection process undergoes change

**WASHINGTON** — The Air Force is creating a central pool of candidates for command chief master sergeant positions in an effort to streamline the selection process.

This change from a voluntary process to a more structured one has several benefits, said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Jim Finch.

“While the former process worked fairly well most of the time, it had some drawbacks and didn’t encourage some of our well-qualified chiefs to apply,” Chief Finch said.

“By creating a manageable pool of candidates we remove the need for a formal application each time a vacancy is announced and eliminate the short-notice suspense that chiefs often faced in the past.”

“It also takes a proactive approach in preparing the candidates, since they will all attend an orientation on CCM roles and responsibilities prior to filling any position,” Chief Finch said. “In addition, it gives commanders greater flexibility in hiring a CCM.”

The selection process begins when the Air Force Personnel Center requests nominations for command chief master sergeants, Chief Finch said.

“Senior raters then identify qualified chief master sergeants who are both interested and well suited for CCM duty and recommend them as nominees,” he said.

The first board will convene in July. To be eligible, chief master sergeants must have a date of rank of Oct. 1, 2000, or earlier and “must have significant supervisory and leadership experience,” Chief Finch said.

After the nominations are collected, an annual board held at AFPC will screen the nominees, creating a pool of candidates.

Once selected, they’ll attend an orientation to better prepare them for CCM duties and will submit their assignment prefer

*Do Something Good For Tomorrow*  
**RECYCLE TODAY!**



Photo by Staff Sgt. Diane Thomas

Smart operators

Col. David Scott, 16th Special Operations Wing commander, congratulates the recipients of the Scholarship for Military Children, Penny Lyn Hendrick and Matthew Johnson, Tuesday. The scholarship, donated by the Defense Commissary Agency, awarded both students \$1,500. To qualify, students had to have at least a 3.0 grade point average and write an essay titled, "What Being a Military Dependent Means to Me." DeCA awarded 350 scholarships.




Groundwater Guardians save some for tomorrow

by Andrea Bishop  
16th Civil Engineer Squadron

Due to the current hot dry conditions, Hurlburt Field is in base water conservation stage two – water warning.

At Hurlburt Field many take water for granted – we turn on the tap and, whoosh, out the water comes, a life sustaining substance. Water is a limited resource. Man cannot economically generate new water from other raw materials. We must wait for the rain and hope enough falls to recharge our ground water supplies, replenish our reservoirs and bolster flows in our streams and rivers. Due to frequent hot and dry conditions that Hurlburt Field and the rest of Florida can experience, this does not always happen. As part of continuous efforts to ensure a continuous supply of water, Hurlburt Field has been a mem-

ber of the Groundwater Guardians Program since 1998. As a Groundwater Guardian, one of our duties has been to establish the Hurlburt Field water conservation policy. This policy consists of three stages to implement progressively more stringent water management measures. Notification of changes in the current base water conservation stage will be publicized in the base newspaper and on the marquees at the gates. Small efforts, such as conscientiously following the water conservation policy, will ensure that future generations have a clean and ready supply of water. Small efforts can add up to big savings. If you have any questions concerning the Water Conservation Policy or would like more information concerning the Groundwater Guardian Program, contact the 16th Civil Engineer Squadron environmental flight at 884-4651.

 Stage 1 Water Watch	 Stage 2 Water Warning	 Stage 3 Water Crisis
Days Allowed	Days Allowed	Days Allowed
Odd # Buildings/Houses Odd # Days	Odd # Buildings/Houses Tuesday and Saturday	OUTDOOR USE OF WATER IS PROHIBITED
Even # Buildings/Houses Even # Days	Even # Buildings/Houses Thursday and Sunday	
Hours Allowed	Hours Allowed	Hours Allowed
0600-1000 or 1800-2200 ** But Not Both Times **	0600-1000 or 1800-2200 ** But Not Both Times **	OUTDOOR USE OF WATER IS PROHIBITED
Length of Time Allowed	Length of Time Allowed	Length of Time Allowed
No more than 30 minutes per zone	No more than 30 minutes per zone	OUTDOOR USE OF WATER IS PROHIBITED
New Sod Restrictions	New Sod Restrictions	New Sod Restrictions
May water each day for the first 30 days after planting, but never between the hours 1000-1800	Limited to watering every other day for the first 30 days after planting, but never between the hours 1000-1800	The laying of new sod is prohibited
	Additional Restrictions	Additional Restrictions
	Car washes are prohibited. (Washing of cars is limited to commercial car washes)	Car washes are prohibited. (Washing of cars is limited to commercial car washes)
	Seeding is prohibited.	Seeding is prohibited.

## *Animal bites cause concern*

**by Capt. Matt Takara**  
*Eglin Veterinary Service*

According to the Center for Disease Control, more than four million animal bites are reported nationwide. Children make up more than 60 percent of all bite victims.

The vast majority of these cases are preventable.

To help protect children from being victims of animal bites, the American Veterinary Medical Association has a few recommendations.

Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog, regardless of its size. Children must be taught not to approach strange animals. Always ask the owner's permission before petting the animal. Don't run past a dog or tease a dog across a fence.

Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Never disturb an animal that's caring for young, sleeping or eating. If approached by a dog, stay still and let the dog sniff you. In most cases the dog will go away when it determines that you're not a threat.

Avoid eye contact. Animals view direct eye contact as a threat or a challenge and may provoke an attack.

If you're the victim of an attack, fall to the ground and curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck, protecting your face. Try not to scream.

When selecting a pet, take into consideration lifestyle and household living. Socialize pets so they feel at ease around people and other animals.

Take the time and train dogs to the basic commands, "sit," "stay," "no" and "come."

Have pets vaccinated against rabies and other diseases.

Neuter pets. CDC statistics show that unaltered animals are three times more likely to bite, and male dogs are six times more likely to bite than females.

Eglin Veterinary Services provides handouts with some "dos and don'ts" around animals and introducing an infant to a pet.

It's never too early to teach mutual respect between children and pets.

Visit Eglin Veterinary Services Monday through Friday from 7:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Eglin Air Force Base in building 888, or call 882-8250.





Video still by Senior Airman Sam Roberts

(From left to right): Staff Sgt. James Elmore, 16th Special Operations Squadron and OPFOR team leader; Airman 1st Class David Torrance, 4th Aircraft Maintenance Unit and OPFOR augmentee; Tech. Sgt. Kevin Kloeppel, 4th SOS and OPFOR team leader; and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Saleska, 20th SOS and OPFOR team leader, make final adjustments to a plan while preparing for a mission to provide training support to the 4th SOS.

## OPFOR

*Continued from Page 1*

taking place here. They're the unit playing terrorist and trying to get on the flightline without authorization during exercises, and they're the bad guys when aircrew members go through refresher survival training.

According to Maj. Bill West, weapons and tactics chief, they provide training support for every flying squadron, the 16th Operations Support Squadron, the 16th Security Forces Squadron, the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, the Hurlburt Exercise Evaluation Team and sometimes units from other services such as the Army Rangers.

It doesn't take special training to be a part of OPFOR, just a desire to experience something new, according to the major.

"We get to shoot and blow up stuff," said Airman 1st Class David Torrance, 4th Aircraft Maintenance Unit. "It's all a good time."

Airman Torrance enjoys the experience because it gets him into the operational world of the Air Force at least for a little while.

"Being more on the ops side provides a break in tempo," he said. "It's worth the effort you put into it."

The airman, who works the mid-shift—11 p.m. to 7 a.m., used a time-off award so he could participate in Tuesday's scenario.

Because of his busy schedule as an honor guard member, a mid-shift maintainer and a three-level airman doing upgrade training, his schedule doesn't allow

him to participate much, but when it does, he welcomes the opportunity.

"Things don't line up often at all," he said of his schedule and working with OPFOR, "but when they do, it's really good."

Anyone can be a part of OPFOR and get the chance to play war games like most people did when they were kids—only this time there are real guns (albeit loaded with blanks) and all terrain vehicles, better known as four wheelers, and just about everything else needed to simulate a war, including pyrotechnics.

"If someone shows up for a mission," said Staff Sgt. James Elmore, 16th SOS aerial gunner doing OPFOR as an additional duty, "we'll take them with us."

OPFOR depends on volunteers to keep it running, and anyone is welcome to be a part, according to Major West.

Airmen from finance, maintenance, services, contracting, the clinic or anywhere else on base can become OPFOR augmentees. There's no real commitment required, said Major West. They have a small cadre of trained team leaders to run the missions but depend on volunteers to make the program work.

"More volunteers equals better and more complex training for the aircrew," said the major.

"The more people the better," said Airman Torrance. "It's an open door, and it's much more fun than sitting at home watching TV."

"Not only is the experience

fun, it's a good opportunity to learn the mission of the 16th Special Operations Wing and to see why and how things happen at Hurlburt Field to support our national mission," said Major West.

Because of their job, the OPFOR unit has the third largest storage of munitions on base, according to Sergeant Elmore. They own night vision goggles, guns, rocket launchers, global positioning equipment and uniforms from other countries.

The tools of this particular

trade can be dangerous, but in its five years of existence, not one accident has occurred because the augmentees are given training, and before every mission, there's a safety briefing, according to Major West.

"My hat is off to any maintainer or support guy who walks through the door as an augmentee," said Sergeant Elmore.

Anyone interested in becoming an OPFOR augmentee can call Sergeant Elmore at 884-1378 or Major West at 884-2922.

**"If someone shows up for a mission, we'll take them with us."**

— Staff Sgt. James Elmore  
4th Special Operations Squadron and  
OPFOR team leader



# Asthma and allergies treated on base

by Maj. Judith O'Neil  
16th Medical Group

A child at school has an asthma attack in the classroom. The radio reports an air pollution alert, warning anyone with breathing problems to stay indoors.

The local school board debates a policy on students carrying inhaler medications. Stories of asthma abound.

In the fall of 1997, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala called for an initiative to tackle the growing problem of asthma – a chronic lung condition that affects more than 17 million Americans and is being recognized as an international public health problem.

During the past 15 years, its prevalence around the world has doubled.

In the United States, rates of asthma death, hospitalizations and emergency department visits have been increasing for more than two decades, especially among African Americans and children.

The cost of asthma in 2000 was estimated to be \$12.7 billion – direct costs amount to \$8.1 billion and lost earnings due to illness and death total \$4.6 billion.

Although the causes of the increasing rates of asthma over the past 15 years aren't known, the most likely reason is an interaction between environmental and genetic factors.

A substantial research effort is underway to identify the genes responsible for susceptibility to asthma.

Many studies have demonstrated that exposure to indoor allergens and environmental tobacco smoke are risk factors for the initial onset of asthma. Asthma symptoms and reactions differ.

What triggers an asthma episode in one person may not affect another person with asthma.

More than 85 percent of children with asthma also have allergies.

Ongoing preventive management is needed for patients

***“There’s no cure for asthma, but it can be controlled.”***

– Maj. Judith O'Neil  
16th Medical Group

with persistent asthma, even when mild. Learning to manage

asthma as a chronic disease is a major challenge for patients as well as for health care providers and others involved in asthma care.

There's no cure for asthma, but it can be controlled. People with asthma can have recurrent episodes of wheezing, coughing and chest tightness.

Some people only experience these episodes when exercising, but people with Asthma don't have to stop exercising.

There are many world-class athletes with asthma who continue to compete and set world records, including Jackie Joyner-Kersey who won the gold medal for the heptathlon in 1988 and 1992.

If you think you or your child may have asthma, please make an appointment to see your primary care manager.

Write down all your questions and take the list with you when you see your provider.

If the diagnosis is asthma, a plan will be prepared to help you manage the symptoms, including how you will avoid triggers, respond to early warning signs of an episode, and take the necessary medicine.

It's important that every person with asthma be diagnosed, receive appropriate treatment, learn how to manage their asthma and reduce exposure to environmental factors that make their asthma worse.



## Dynamic duo

A 6th Special Operations Squadron UH-1N Huey helicopter and a 20th SOS MH-53J Pave Low helicopter fly in a dissimilar formation May 23. A dissimilar formation occurs when two or more different types of aircraft are flying in formation. This often happens when aircraft from different services fly together.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Vic Owens

# 353rd SOG doc supports P-3 crew

by **Master Sgt. Michael Farris**  
353rd Special Operations Group  
Public Affairs

**KADENA AIR BASE, Japan** — As the “top doc” in the 353rd Special Operations Group, Maj. Tim Robinette routinely deploys throughout the Pacific. Consequently, it was no surprise when he was chosen to lead the medical arm of a repatriation team headed to China’s Hainan Island to return a downed Navy crew.

As it turns out, the operation went quickly and without drama, but as the major said, “We had to prepare for the worst.” More than 50 people were formed into three repatriation teams. A primary team and a secondary team were eventually pre-positioned in Guam, while a maintenance team remained at Kadena. Only 14 people went into China and they were on the ground in just one hour — but nobody knew that’s how it would shake out.

“We created a deployment line where we checked immunizations, issued malaria prophylaxis, distributed screening questionnaires and briefed the teams on medi-

cal dos and don’ts,” Major Robinette said. Prepping the repatriation teams was only half of the planning prescription.

“We also reviewed the P-3 crew’s medical records to determine if any had medical issues,” he said. “If they had injuries, we suspected they would have been from the descent after the collision.”

Persistent negotiations between Washington and Beijing created an air of uncertainty among the repatriation team.

“The anticipation was both exhilarating and tiring,” he said. “It was hard to sleep for the 11 days between when I was notified and actually leaving for China.”

Finally, on April 12, the commercial airliner lifted off from Guam. Major Robinette and his team of three Navy medical personnel were ready for anything.

Thirty minutes after landing at Hainan Island, two busses pulled up and the P-3 crew filed out toward the plane.

“I was watching as they walked toward us,” he said. “They all looked pretty good.”

To maintain chain-of-command and crew integrity, Major Robinette first contacted the P-3 commander, U.S. Navy Lt.



Photo by Staff Sgt. John Giles

Maj. Timothy Robinette (center), Navy Lt. Gary Hoyt, (right), and Navy Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Mark Kane (left), medical personnel, go over last minute concerns in support of Operation Valiant Return, April 11. The team’s mission was to retrieve the American crew of the EP-3 involved in an accident with a Chinese F-8 aircraft.

Shane Osborne, and asked him to identify those who needed immediate treatment.

Although the P-3 crew didn’t experience any serious injuries, several had been seen and treated by Chinese doctors.

Major Robinette then traveled with the crew to Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, Wash., to ensure continuity of care.

The major said being selected for this mission was an honor. He credits his op-

erational experience in the special operations group, his flight’s wealth of rapidly deployable equipment and his survival training as keys to his selection.

“When I handed the Navy crew off to the medical staff at Whidbey, I felt good and knew everything was in place for their long-term care,” he said. “I saw them with their families and I knew they were in good hands.” (NFNS)



# LIFESTYLE

## Military

### Mass ANG

The Massachusetts Air National Guard is seeking active duty servicemembers willing to separate from the Air Force to fill part-time and full-time vacancies. All members of the Mass ANG are entitled to 100-percent free tuition at all Massachusetts State colleges and universities. Members will also receive their active duty Montgomery GI Bill benefits. If someone is unable to be placed in his or her current Air Force specialty code, retraining is available. If interested in a Palace Chase/Front assignment, call Master Sgt. Pete Gorman at DSN 256-7467, or e-mail at [peter.gordman@mabarn.ang.af.mil](mailto:peter.gordman@mabarn.ang.af.mil).

### Spanish linguists wanted

The Air Force Personnel Center requests volunteers for Spanish linguist positions in support of Operation Dominant Chronical, counter-drug division. Temporary duty start dates are July 6 and 23. There are six positions available for each date. All volunteers must submit a letter that includes his or her name, grade, Social Security number, Air Force specialty code, unit, security clearance, duty phone, language proficiency level and unit commander's endorsement to the 16th Mission Support Squadron, Personnel Readiness Function, located in building 90210, room 132.

The following requirements must be met for consideration for this TDY: E-6 or below; 90-day tour length with possible volunteer extension to 179 days; minimum proficiency level I2+/r2+; minimum clearance, secret; must possess government credit card; duty to be performed in Washington, DC area; must meet medical and dental standards prior to TDY. For more information, call the 16th MSS/PRF at 884-2721, or e-mail at [dist.16sg.16mss.pru@hurlburt.af.mil](mailto:dist.16sg.16mss.pru@hurlburt.af.mil).

### ALS position open

Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., seeks a highly-motivated staff sergeant to serve as an instructor at the base's Airman Leadership School. People interested in this position should call DSN 493-2415 for more information.

### Olmstead Scholar Program

The Olmstead Scholar Program provides an opportunity for up to officers to study in a foreign language university abroad. Applications must be sent to the Air Force Personnel Center by Oct. 1. For more information about the program and eligibility criteria, visit military personnel flight's customer service section.

## Community

### Parking lot blues

Due to the construction of a new command center, building 90210 lost 73 parking spaces in the center of the main parking lot.

Building occupants should park in the overflow lots

across Terry Street at the 16th Transportation Squadron or across Lukasik Street. Building 90210 occupants not attending classes at the education center should not use its parking lot. Parking tickets will be issued to building occupants observed parking in visitors spaces.

### Claims against airmen

Airman 1st Class John D. Meade, a member of the 16th Aircraft Generation Squadron, passed away May 8 as a result of a single vehicle accident. Anyone with a claim for or against Airman Meade should contact Capt. Harry Seibert, 16th AGS, at 884-8468.

Airman 1st Class Brandon Beard, a member of the 4th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, passed away May 15 as a result of a single vehicle accident. Anyone with a claim for or against Airman Beard should contact 1st Lt. Louie Cumming, 4th AMU, at 884-8507.

### AFC2TIG change of command

Col. Charles Wilson II relinquishes command of the Air Force Command and Control Training and Innovation Group to Col. Kevin Dunleavy Wednesday at 3 p.m. at the Air Park. Maj. Gen. Gerald Perryman, Jr., Aerospace Command and Control Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center commander, will preside over the ceremony. The base community is invited to attend.

### Torchlight parade

The 46th annual Sprint Billy Bowlegs Torchlight Parade is held Monday at 8 p.m. on Eglin parkway in Fort Walton Beach. This year's theme for the festival and parade is "A Pirate Odyssey." People interested in participating in the parade should call Christine Yancey at the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce at 244-1935. Participation fees are \$25 for commercial and \$15 for all other entries.

### OWCC mini-term

New and returning students may register now through June 22 for a six-week summer mini-term at Okaloosa-Walton Community College. The mini-term allows students to earn all the credit of a normal college term in a compressed period of time. Class dates are June 18 to July 31. Classes are offered at OWCC's Hurlburt Field, Eglin Air Force Base and Niceville locations. Civilian students may register for and attend courses at the base education centers. Call 729-6922, or visit the college Web site at [www.owcc.cc.fl.us](http://www.owcc.cc.fl.us), for a course listing.

### Animal show

The June show at the Art Center Gallery of the Arts and Design Society of Fort Walton Beach features studies of animals. "Animals, Birds, Bees and Bugs" is an exhibition of ADSO members' original art works. The show continues through June 24.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. and 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free. The gallery is located at 17 First Street, S.E. For more information, call 244-1271.

### Hurlburt Field Chapel (884-7795)



#### Catholic Masses

Saturday, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, 7:30 and 10 a.m.

Confessions: Saturday, 4:30 to 5 p.m., or by request.

Youth: 5 p.m. Sunday

#### Protestant Services

Sunday, 8:45 a.m. (praise & worship),

11:15 a.m. (traditional),

12:30 p.m. (Gospel)

Religious Education: August - May  
Youth and Singles groups available

#### Jewish Services (882-2111)

Sabbath services: Friday, 7:30 p.m., Eglin Chapel 1

Havdallah services: next-to-the-last Saturday of each month, 7 p.m., Chapel annex

#### Muslim Services (882-2111)

Jumuah: Friday, 12:45 p.m.

Qur'an: Saturday, 6 p.m.

## At the movies



**Prices are \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for children. Movies start at 7 p.m. unless otherwise indicated.**

### Hurlburt Field (884-7648)

**Friday** - (R) "Blow," starring Johnny Depp and Penelope Cruz - George was just your average small-town American boy who decided to pursue the American dream his way - by becoming the first American to import cocaine into the United States on a large-scale. Soon, he was sleeping, breathing and eating money, living out a fantastic no-rules lifestyle many have dreamed about. But no matter what he did, he could never get the only thing he truly wanted: a love that couldn't be taken from him.

**Saturday** - (PG-13) "Someone Like You," starring Ashley Judd and Greg Kinnear - Jane has everything going for her with her daytime talk show and her hot romance. She begins an extensive study of male behavior to try to find out what makes men tick. Her "research" leads her to become an overnight sensation/guru for single women everywhere. Throughout her research, she finds both humor and answers where they were least expected.

**Sunday** - (R) "Freddy Got Fingered," starring Drew Barrymore and Marisa Coughlan - When the 28-year-old Gord decides he wants to be an animator, quits his job and returns home to live in his parents' basement, his father is neither amused nor proud. Dad thinks Gord is a slacker and should grow up, get a real job and get out of the house. But Gord won't budge and father and son embark on an all-out war that ends up taking them halfway around the world.

### Eglin (882-1066)

**Friday** - (R) "Along Came a Spider," starring Morgan Freeman and Monica Potter - A congressman's daughter under Secret Service protection is kidnapped from a private school by an insider who calls Detective Alex Cross, sucking him into the case even though he's recovering from the loss of his partner.

**Saturday** - (PG) "Crocodile Dundee in Los Angeles," starring Paul Hogan and Linda Kozlowski - The first movie took Mick to New York City, the second movie brought Mick and Sue back to the Outback, and now in the third film, Mick and Sue are headed to Hollywood to investigate the mystery of a murder that leads to a movie studio.

**Sunday** - (R) "One Night at McCool's," starring Liv Tyler and Matt Dillon - It all started one night at McCool's. Three unsuspecting men and one woman with a dream are brought together. Before the night was over, she had become all the three men could think about. She moved in on one, made the other forget his (living) wife, and made the third forget his (dead) wife. She was more trouble than these three men were worth - and what she wanted was bigger than all of them put together.

*(Editor's note: Movies are subject to change. Telephone numbers are provided for patrons to confirm scheduled play dates.)*

# LIFESTYLE

## Community

### Car wash

The Okaloosa Knights Minor League Football Team hosts a car wash Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Auto Zone in Niceville. Raffle tickets are also sold. Come out and support your local team! For more information, call Luis Lopez at 651-0663 or email okaloosaknights@hotmail.com.

## Classes

### Boat handling class

A one-month certified U.S. Coast Guard small boat handling class starts Wednesday at Beachside Outdoor Recreation. The class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 5 to 7 p.m., and runs until June 27. Ages 12 and up can attend, and cost is \$30 for books. For more information, call Beachside at 884-6939.

### Quilting class

A fine hand quilting class is offered at the Heritage Museum June 9, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The five-hour class is designed to teach beginners or help experienced quilters improve their quilt-

ing stitches. In addition to learning three ways to do the quilting stitch, people will also learn how to make templates and mark quilt designs before and after layering.

A quilting kit is provided which contains fabric and batting to make a 16-inch design area, two quilting needles, a washout marker, safety pins and pattern.

Students need to bring an 11-by-11-inch or 11-by-17-inch PVC quilting hoop or a 10-by-14-inch wooden quilting hoop, one spool of colored quilting thread, a small towel and small scissors.

An example of the square to be quilted can be viewed at the museum. The cost is \$35 for members and \$40 for non-members. Early registration is important. For registration or for more information, call 678-2615.

### FSC

For more information on family support center classes, call 884-5441.

**Career Focus Orientation** – Monday, at 9 a.m.

**Sponsorship Training** – Monday, at 1 p.m.

**Transition Assistance Program** – Three days, Tuesday at 7:20 a.m., Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30 a.m.

**Moms, Pops and Tots** – Tuesday, at 10 a.m. for children from birth to age 2 and Wednesday, at 10 for ages 2 to 4.

**Enhancing Relationships** –

Tuesday, at 6:30 p.m.

**Bundles for Babies** – Wednesday, at 1 p.m.

**VA Women's brief** – Thursday, at 9 a.m.

**Deployment Readiness** – Thursday, at 9 a.m. to prepare individuals and couples for deployment, temporary duty assignments and remote tours.

## Sports

### Paintball meeting

The outdoor recreation center hosts the next paintball meeting today at 3 p.m. at the Beachside Marina, teal building. Topics of discussion include installation of safety netting, building a course and referees. For more information, call 884-6939.

### B-ball refs wanted

An instructional camp for new and experienced basketball officials is held June 8 to 10 at Pryor Middle School, Fort Walton Beach. The camp incorporates extensive classroom instruction and on-the-floor evaluations with emphasis on three-man mechanics, positioning and basketball philosophies. College supervisors and assignors will be in attendance. For more information, call 968-9299 or 882-8797, extension 202.

# TRICARE benefits increase

The National Defense Authorization Act, which was signed into law in October 2000, authorized several new TRICARE benefits.

Retirees, TRICARE Prime members and Medal of Honor recipients benefit from the most recent TRICARE upgrade.

TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program brings Medicare-eligible uniformed services retirees pharmacy benefits with access to the military treatment facility pharmacies, the National Mail Order Pharmacy program and network and non-network pharmacies. This new program for military retirees over age 65, which is the same pharmacy benefit as that received by military retirees under the age of 65, limits out-of-pocket prescription expenses

while it increases access to a wide range of pharmacy options.

All beneficiaries who turned 65 prior to April 1, 2001, automatically qualify for the benefit.

All beneficiaries who turn 65 on or after April 1, 2001, must be enrolled in Medicare Part B to receive this benefit.

All beneficiaries must have up-to-date information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility System in order to receive this new entitlement.

Active duty family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime no longer have to make co-payments for the care they receive from their civilian providers.

Previously, family members of active duty members in pay grades E-1 to E-4 paid \$6, while pay grades E-5 and above paid

\$12 for such visits. In addition, family members' \$11 per day civilian inpatient charge has been eliminated, as has the \$11.45 per day family member rate for enrollees admitted to a military treatment facility.

Please note that the co-payment requirement remains in effect for prescription drugs.

Former members of the armed forces who are Medal of Honor recipients and who aren't otherwise entitled to receive TRICARE medical benefits, may now, upon request, be eligible to receive those benefits. This benefit also applies to immediate family members of Medal of Honor recipients.

For information on any of the new benefits, visit the TRICARE Web site at [www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil).



## SPORTS

# 16th Comm takes 23rd straight soccer victory



Photos by Senior Airman James Davis

Jason Reiff, 6th Special Operations Squadron varsity soccer team, puts on the brakes as Vee Mongsaithong, 16th Communications Squadron team, tries to block the ball.

**by Airman Sam Taylor**  
*Public Affairs*

The 16th Communications Squadron varsity soccer team took its 23rd straight win since last year by taking out the 6th

Special Operations Squadron team 2-1 Tuesday.

After a late start and a long, drawn-out battle throughout the first half, Jason Goodal, 6th SOS team captain, kicked the first goal of the season against the mighty

Comm Squadron, snatching the lead for the 6th.

Not to be outdone, Comm's Jaime Cortes answered back with a penalty kick score, bringing the tally to a 1-1 tie.

A miniscule halftime barely cut into



Steven Robertson, 6th SOS varsity soccer team, stampedes down the field with a herd of fellow soccer junkies.

the action and after the short break, the heat poured on with twice the fervor as before.

Comm ruthlessly assailed the 6th SOS goal, bringing an onslaught of attacks defended equally ruthlessly by the 6th.

The fruit of their ferocity was borne when Comm's Vee Mongsaithong kicked the final goal of the game, securing yet another win for the long-undefeated team.

"I guess we must have had a mental lapse, because the 6th SOS scored the first goal of the year on us," said J.R. Waters, comm coach. "The 6th SOS and AFSOC [Air Force Special Operations Command] will give us the most trouble, but I think we have a really good shot at the base title this year."

## Yoga offers fitness for life

**by Senior Airman Alisa Owens**  
*16th Services Squadron*

The Hurlburt Field Fitness Center offers a lunchtime Yoga class, and, because of the response, an evening class has been established. The evening Yoga class began May 3 and is off to a successful start.

Lissa Stallings-Boone, a graduate of Florida State University with a degree in Leisure Studies, has always been involved in physical activities. This interest later evolved to Yoga as a lifelong exercise practice, as she's a certified Yoga instructor.

She has shown that this form of exercise is one you can incorporate for the rest of your life.

Ms. Stallings-Boone states, "The benefits of Yoga are subjective – usually very personal. There's no doubt Yoga has effect on reducing stress. It's a low-impact, intense exercise that will enhance your balance, flexibility and muscular strength."

Ms. Stallings-Boone strongly encourages consistent, regular Yoga practice.

The class is open to all active duty, Department of Defense civilians and their family members.

Monday and Thursday classes are offered from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the Commando Fitness Center. The cost is \$15 per month. For more information, call 884-4412.



Photo by Senior Airman Alisa Owens

Lt. Col. Virginia Spisak, an active duty reservist with the 16th Medical Operations Squadron, practices Yoga at the main fitness center.



# Boy Scouts provide leadership

by **Master Sgt. Cathy Landroche**  
Public Affairs

When his father was stationed here from 1976 to 1987 as an illuminator operator on the AC-130H, Clyde "Clay" Gowdy II joined Hurlburt Field Boy Scout Troop 509. He even acquired the highest rank attainable – Eagle Scout – in 1986.

Today, Staff Sgt. Clay Gowdy is a flight engineer in the 15th Special Operations Squadron, working on the MC-130H. In his six years at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., he became involved in Scouts with his son, Clyde Gowdy III, better known as Trey.

When the family returned to the Fort Walton Beach area in 1999, within two months, he was attending Scout summer camp. And for the past two years he's served as an assistant scoutmaster for the very troop he grew up in. Trey is a member as well.

While some things have changed, one constant remains – Bill Britt is still serving as assistant scoutmaster. Mr. Britt, a retired major who currently works with the 19th SOS as an instructor pilot for Lockheed Martin, originally got involved in scouting in 1982 as a lieutenant. "I assisted in the Webelos for a week and they needed a den leader. They told me it would take about an hour of my time weekly," said the 19-year scout veteran. "I found that wasn't true – it turned into much more than that."

Mr. Britt saw all the boys graduate from Webelos to Boy Scouts and once he found a replacement, he moved over to the older group as well. PCS took him to Panama and Columbia and he returned to the local area for good in 1995.

Today, he considers the Boy Scouts his extended family. "I've watched these kids grow up," he said fondly, of his relationship with Sergeant Gowdy and his family. He's Trey's godfather and was the best man in another scout's wedding. "Those are the type of things you just can't buy."

"Bill and I have remained friends even after I became an adult," said Sergeant Gowdy. "He's given a lot of time and money over the years and what he's provided to the boys is priceless."

The Hurlburt Field troop has been in existence since 1958 and boasts a remarkable heritage. The troop's flag has two stars on it, in remembrance of two assistant scoutmasters who were killed in the line of military duty. Capt. William Grimm was on Spirit 03, the AC-130H, which was shot down in January 1991. Tech. Sergeant Joel Mayo died in the April 1980 Iran hostage rescue attempt.

Troop 509 claims more than 30 boys who've progressed to Eagle Scout. According to Sergeant Gowdy, only one in 10 achieves that rank.

Mr. Britt paraphrased something he'd heard long ago, "A man never stands so tall as when he stoops over to help a boy. When someone says, 'Thanks, I learned that from you,' it's better than winning the lottery."

"If you treat a boy like a kid, he'll act like a kid. It's a maturation process. Give a Scout a little responsibility and let him know if he wants something bad enough, he can get it, and we [the scoutmasters] will be there to help him."

Sergeant Gowdy agreed, "Scouting



Photo by Master Sgt. Cathy Landroche

Scoutmaster Terry Cook shows Trey Gowdy the proper way to pack a tent.



(Left to right) Staff Sgt. Clay Gowdy and Bill Britt, assistant scoutmasters, and Trey Gowdy battle engagements for the USS Alabama, during a recent overnight visit to the USS Alabama.

teaches boys 11 and above how to be leaders – they're the ones telling a group of their peers how to do something and how to do it correctly. They're our leaders of tomorrow," he said.

"Today, 85 years after its conception, the Boy Scouts are still working hard to mold decent, trustworthy, loyal young men," said Sergeant Gowdy.

Terry Cook, who's been involved with scouting for 14 years, has been the scoutmaster here since 1996. He said the size of the troop has waxed and waned over the years, ranging from six to 35 boys. Currently, 22 boys are members. "There's no requirement to be affiliated with the military to join – any boy wishing to be part of the Hurlburt Field troop is welcome."

Mr. Cook has direct involvement with the boys on day-to-day activities. "School sports have a lot to offer," he said, comparing the camaraderie, "but we don't have a season. We're here all year 'round and we offer something beyond what sports can give. Everyone remembers their scouting experiences."

The troop has been involved in several activities in the past few months: They

toured and spent the night on the USS Alabama – a luxury offered only to Scout troops; camped out at Choctawhatchee High School as participants for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life; biked from Gulf Breeze to Pensacola; and spent the weekend at Wakulla Springs, Fla. Campouts are planned nearly every month and summer camp runs one week every June. This year they're going to Camp Comer, Ala.

"These boys deserve recognition," said Mr. Britt. "Every food drive, they're out there collecting the bags throughout family housing; they've planted pine trees near Soundside housing; cleaned up the Nature Trail and helped the Hurlburt Officers Spouses' Club during its annual craft bazaar."

Volunteers are always welcome as merit badge counselors. More than 100 different badges are available to the boys. Examples are first aid, emergency preparedness, lifesaving and environmental science.

Staff Sgt. Carrie Hinson, a photographer with the 16th Communications Squadron, recently spent several Tuesday evenings helping scouts earn their



# preparation, camaraderie



Photo by Daniel Landroche

dy, look over a plaque showing locations of bama Battleship Memorial Park in Mobile.

photography merit badge. Master Sgt. Daniel Jessup, 16th Civil Engineer Squadron, worked with the boys on atomic energy.

"We like the families to be involved — not just drop the boys off for meetings and pick them up. Family life is one of our merit badges and we like everyone to be a part of the troop," said Mr. Cook.

Though Sergeant Gowdy and his family are in the process of a PCS move to Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, for a four-year tour, he hopes to return to the 15th SOS, Troop 509, and his mentor, Mr. Britt.

For Mr. Britt, the wait will be a long one, but worth it. "I just hope Trey waits until he comes back here to make Eagle Scout," he said, "that would be the icing on the cake."

Any boy looking for adventure, friendship and a challenge is encouraged to stop by the scout hut, located on the Soundside by the thrift shop, Monday nights at 7 p.m. when regular meetings occur. Boys don't have to be affiliated with the base or the military to join. Parents can also call Mr. Cook at 581-9365, Mr. Britt at 939-6606 or go online to [www.troop509.org](http://www.troop509.org).

## Scouting helps young man find his way

by Master Sgt. Cathy Landroche  
Public Affairs

For La Vonne Vasquez, Hurlburt Field's transition assistance program manager, and her son, Nick, the Boy Scouts have proven to be an effective leadership tool.

"Nick was in Boy Scouts for about a year," said Mrs. Vasquez, "but I pulled him out when he was 12 because I didn't really think he was getting anything out of it."

In October of that same year, Nick and a friend discovered an abandoned house and managed to get inside. "He told me about it," she said, "and I told him not to go back, but he disobeyed me."

"Being the curious kids we were, we went back in December," said Nick. "There was an old car from the 1940s in the garage and we wanted to check it out again." When they got inside, the car was gone. As they came out of the house, Nick heard a police radio and saw a patrol car slowly slide into view.

The policeman frisked them and placed them in the police car, leaving their bikes in the driveway. "It was an unbelievably tight fit," said Nick of the ride to the police station. "I was sitting in the back seat with the grill in my face thinking about my Dad coming home from the gym and what he'd say."

The boys were put in an open area of the police station and had to wait for their parents to pick them up. "When my mom came, she had this look on her face, like 'Your head's mine.' She told me I could forget about Christmas and New Years," he said.

Besides having a day in court, several community service hours, writing a 500-word essay on the situation and a letter of apology to the homeowner, Nick also faced punishment from his parents. He was grounded for the next four months with no television, radio or "contact with the outside world" except for going to school. He also didn't get the bike he wanted for Christmas.

After the incident, Mrs. Vasquez



**Nick Vasquez**

decided Nick should give scouting another try and urged him to get involved again. She became active in Hurlburt Field Boy Scout Troop 509 as well, becoming Boy Scout Committee secretary.

Four years later, Nick is the junior assistant scoutmaster for the troop, after serving as senior patrol leader three years in a row. He hopes to make Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable, this fall.

Today, the 16-year-old is a 9th grader at Fort Walton Beach High School and has been active in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps for the last year, as well as the Color Guard. His aspirations are to be an officer, "either a pilot or logistics" and follow in his father's footsteps. He's also on the track team, involved in cross-country.

"With Scouting, being involved with a group of good people has built up Nick's self-confidence and increased his leadership skills," said Mrs. Vasquez. "He's learned to stand up for himself and control his temper."

"His heart's desire is to join the military, she said, "and it really scared him when the officer told him that if he got in trouble again, he wouldn't get in. Nick didn't like the fact that he'd hurt his father. Terry Cook, the troop's scoutmaster, and Bill Britt, the assistant scoutmaster, were really helpful in getting him back on the right track."

"Initially, Nick came to the meetings dressed totally in black and sporting a sullen attitude," said Mr. Cook of Nick's initial affiliation with the troop. "The change in him

since his return in 1997 has been 180 degrees — from one universe to another. Today, he's the best kid in the troop."

Mr. Britt, echoed the praise, "Even in the last year he's shown so much maturity. We're really able to depend on him." The two men said Nick reminded them of Kurt Russell's character in the 1966 Walt Disney film "Follow Me Boys," the story of a scoutmaster in a small town who helps guide a wayward boy with the help of scouting.

"I like the challenge and leadership opportunities," said Nick. "Mr. Cook always tells me to delegate, but I still enjoy getting my hands dirty."

Nick said scouting teaches core values: "Integrity, responsibility, leadership, followership and community activities. It also teaches people values, morals and the ability to take a challenge aggressively," he said.

The teen showed his values in November with a letter to the editor of the *Northwest Florida Daily News* concerning the poor condition of a flag flying over a local high school's football stadium.

"I'm a student in the Junior ROTC program at Fort Walton Beach High School as well as a Life Scout with Hurlburt Boy Scout Troop 509," he wrote.

"I'm on the color guard in my ROTC unit and was very upset when performing at the last football game. The flag flying over the stadium is torn, tattered and faded. The flag needs to be retired, for we all need to honor our American heritage. The American flag is a symbol of what our men and women have fought for over many years — our freedom."

A new flag was raised over the school's stadium a week later.

In today's changing times, some people may think scouting isn't "cool." Nick said he's dealt with his share of people over the years that have given him a hard time.

But to those who may scoff, his answer is simple and full of confidence: "I just tell them, 'I'll accomplish far more than you ever will in life.'"